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Book Notices.

A Commentary on Esther.

An Explanatory Commentary on Esther, with four Appendices, consisting of the Second Targum translated from the Aramaic with notes, Mithra, the winged bulls of Persepolis, and Zoroaster. By Professor Paulus Cassel, D.D. Translated by Rev. Aaron Bernstein. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1888. Pp. 400. Price, \$3.00.

The learning of Dr. Cassel is undoubted. He has not the faculty, however, of organizing his knowledge so as to present an orderly and attractive commentary. The present work on Esther is a mass of curious learning combined with trivial and commonplace observations in morals and religion. So-called "illustrative material" is gathered from all parts of the world and all periods of history, which more frequently makes "darkness visible." The Book of Esther is, doubtless, a difficult book to comment upon, but certainly a more scientific and useful work than this ought to have been produced by so eminent a scholar as Dr. Cassel. Sober and sensible opinions stand side by side with the wildest fancies of Jewish rabbis. The commentary, itself, is in sore need of a judicious and scientific editor. If some well-trained and scholarly student could condense and rearrange it, the book would be much more useful. At present it is a store-house of materials for the future commentator but of little value to the average student of the Book of Esther.

Weiss' Introduction to the New Testament.

A Manual of Introduction to the New Testament. By Dr. Bernhard Weiss. Translated from the German by A. J. K. Davidson. 2 volumes. New York: Funk and Wagnalls. 1889. Price, \$4.00.

It is a gratification to all American biblical scholars to welcome a translation of a work containing the mature conclusions upon questions of New Testament criticism of so eminent a scholar as Professor Weiss. It supplies a want which is not fully met by any of the many treatises which discuss the same range of questions. Holtzmann's Introduction is a dry compend of opinions; Hilgenfeld's is too much affected by the destructive criticism of the Tübingen school to receive the approval of most scholars. The Introduction by Bleek, though one of the ablest that has ever appeared, is, in some points, behind the times in its critical conclusions. Mangold's edition of Bleek aims, indeed, to bring the work up to the present stage of investigation by adding supplementary and correcting notes, but this method yields an unsatisfactory result. The reader has before him two books side by side continually antagonizing each other. Moreover, some of the opinions of the editor seem to us as little justified by criticism as do those of the original author on the same points. The recent volume on Introduction by Dr. Marcus Dods contains a terse and interesting presentation of the questions relating to the various New Testament books, but is too elementary for any but beginners in this study and too non-committal upon points of capital importance to satisfy the inquirer who consults it.

The work of Weiss is elaborate and exhaustive. The author has embodied in it the results of a long and brilliant career as New Testament specialist. He has distinguished himself especially by his investigations into the Synoptic problem. The details of his theory upon the origin and relation of the Synoptic gospels were fully presented some years ago in two volumes upon the gospels of Matthew and Mark and their parallel passages. Stated in few words the theory of Weiss is that the writing by the Apostle Matthew to which early writers refer under the name of *Logia* or Oracles and which they declare to have been written in Aramaic, is the oldest primitive document whose presence we can distinctly trace in our Synoptics. It entered most fully into the first gospel and thus gave to it the name of Matthew. Viewing the gospels in their present form, Weiss holds that Mark is the oldest and thinks that it was used by the writers of the first and third. There is thus a double direct relation between the first and second gospels; both are dependent upon a common writing (the *Logia*) and the first is again dependent upon the second. The third gospel is largely dependent upon the second, but between the first and third there is no direct interdependence. This theory is wrought out with great ability and acumen and while grave difficulties may be urged against some of its features, it appears to us, on the whole, to account for the phenomena of the Synoptic gospels more satisfactorily than most of the views which have been current.

We think that those who consult Weiss' Introduction will recognize in him a happy union of the progressive and conservative spirit in biblical investigation. He is a striking illustration of the fact that the most strictly critical processes are not necessarily destructive in their tendency and result. Weiss is hampered by no theory of what the facts of Scripture must be. He does not, as has been so often done in all ages, determine the results to which he must come in advance in order to reach them. He pursues untrammelled the methods of both the Higher and the Lower Criticism. The many American students who have attended his lectures will never forget the vehemence with which he attacks arbitrary interpretations and conclusions which are determined by dogmatic bias. Yet, Weiss, with all these free and, as many would think, radical tendencies, comes to essentially orthodox conclusions and champions evangelical beliefs distinctively upon the basis of free and searching criticism. This fact lends a special interest and importance to his position and work for all who are zealous for evangelical truth.

We commend this work to the attention of all earnest students of the New Testament. It will richly repay a careful study. The man who will master the contents of these volumes will know the things most important to be known about New Testament Criticism and the man who imbibes its spirit will be prepared for a candid and reverent study of the important questions which relate to the origin, genuineness and credibility of the books of the New Testament.

Word Studies in the Writings of John.

Word Studies in the New Testament. Vol. II. The Writings of John; the Gospel, the Epistles, the Apocalypse. By Marvin R. Vincent, D.D. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889. 8vo, pp. 607. Price, \$4.00.

The title of this work is a very modest one. Its contents are much more than studies of words in the New Testament. They embrace a somewhat thorough presentation of the course of thought in chapters and the exegetical treatment of verses and phrases where difficulties present themselves. The order of treatment is not topical but the material is taken up as it presents itself in the book or chap-